



MACBITER

It's hard to get excited about a new iMac and iPod when you've helped the new James Bond get where he is today and seen his naked bottom. MacBiter's brush with fame has him both shaken and stirred

I'm not sure what the etiquette is on these occasions. Do I refer openly to the fact that this column is half the size of previous MacBiter's, or do I just pass over it in silence, assuming you'll (a) notice it but not care, or (b) not notice at all? And if I mention it, do I speculate on the possible reasons thereof – there are only two, though not mutually exclusive – or do I let you form your own opinions? I wish I knew.

Fewer column inches necessitates a more compressed authorial style, so here's the Mac news. Apple has launched a new version of the iMac with a built-in webcam and a remote control so it can be used as a digital hub. Oh, and there's a new iPod that does video. Here's the industry comment. Phew! Could life get more exciting? An existing computer has been upgraded and had a gadget tacked on for 'added value', and an existing gadget has had a new application grafted in. When have we heard that before? Every year since 1985?

In the case of the iMac, the gadget that has been tacked on is a webcam, a device that requires the user to be sitting in front of the screen. With me so far? The digital hub idea, which the remote control is meant to facilitate, requires that nobody be sitting in front of (and blocking) the screen. So the remote control and webcam cancel each other out. Personal computer or family viewing area? It can't be both.

HUB CRAP

Then there's the half-arsed notion of the digital hub itself. Microsoft's Media Center and its vicissitudes ought to have convinced many that this idea is a no-hoper. Apple has been punting it around as a concept for years, ever since it was called multimedia (a word you don't often hear nowadays), and it could be said that the original 1987 HyperCard was the first software designed to act as a multimedia hub.

One problem with the digital hub idea – planting a personal computer or other device at the heart of your 21st century Domestic Information System – is that this territory is already taken, and defended, by the chaps who make

TVs. The domestic TV is not only the existing visual focal point for the household, but a decent digital hub in its own right. Into those EXT sockets on the back can be plugged DVDs, VCRs, games consoles – and the output from a PC if you want to project your measly laptop image on to a magnificent 36 inches of plasma hanging on the wall like a magic mirror.

The more upmarket ones have all this gadgetry integrated with at most two remote controls, and they have superb sound, with subwoofers capable of

away. Slideshows? Why would any human creature in full possession of his or her marbles ever want to watch, let alone create, a slideshow?

Nobody will pass up *Celebrity Human Sacrifice* for the chance to watch a slideshow. They'll listen to audio on their existing CD system. They'll watch DVD and video on the biggest screen available: the TV. If they play games, chances are it'll be on a PlayStation 3 (plugged into the TV) rather than a Mac. The Digital Hub idea is, was and will always be pure bollocks, except for a few saddos with more dough than brains.

All this militates against a mass takeover, but we shall see.

PREMIUM BOND

But this commercial hype is paltry alongside my personal news. Prepare to be awed as I hereby reveal that... I am James Bond's godfather.

Incredibly, this is nearly true. I am actually James Bond's older sister's godfather. If Bond himself had been born a year earlier, I would have been his godfather, but his sister arrived first and drew the short straw. Still, I feel a quasi-godfatherly kinship for the lad, whom I first met crawling bare-arsed around the kitchen floor. (That is, he was bare-arsed, not me.) When I saw him recently he was a fully grown-up, professionally successful, in-demand actor called Daniel Craig. And friends, I'm here to tell you that despite those ice-blue eyes and chiselled features, the new 007 is a pussycat.

Needless to say, I have already begun to cash in on this relationship. Despite having met him only three times in his life, I have given it as my opinion that he owes it all to me. By having nothing to do with him during his career – training at RADA, years of repertory, *Our Friends in the North*, several movies including *The Road to Perdition* – I feel I have done more than my bit to bring about the megastardom that now awaits him.

If just once during those years he had come to me and asked my quasi-godfatherly advice about an aspect of his career or personal life, it is certain I would have steered him entirely and ludicrously in the wrong direction. And today, instead of being about to film *Casino Royale*, he would be working nights in a call centre to make ends meet. He does owe it all to me.

So, Daniel my almost-godson, that'll be half-a-dozen tickets for the premiere, if you don't mind. And if my fee seems excessive, think how much the *News of the Screws* would pay for the full story of that bare-arse-in-the-kitchen incident. **CS**



bringing a 1960s tower block down in a heap of rubble. And the iMac (maximum screen 20 inches) is going to compete with this?

CONTROL FREAK

Apple presumably thinks so, because it's invented some special controlling software that can be seen from a distance and therefore operated with the natty remote control. I don't know about you, but I already have about four remote controls. Do I really want another one? What can I get with it, TV? No, Apple isn't supplying a tuner card, which seems to make nonsense of the whole idea. DVD and audio, yes – but most computers already do DVD and audio, so there's nothing new about this except doing it from 10 feet

The webcam might be a laugh, though. Assuming you haven't got one already, of course.

As for the new iPod, I haven't seen one but my friends tell me the picture is good quality on the device, and crap if viewed on the Mac, like early QuickTime. The problem seems to be 'content', with choice, price and availability all far from resolved. And is there an overwhelming public desire for handheld video? Unlike the ordinary iPod or a mobile, it can't be used while in motion – on a Tube escalator, perhaps for a few, snatched escapist seconds, or in a lift, but essentially it's a sitting down device. Sit down with it in a public place, though, and you're liable to have it snatched from your grip by one of those robbing hoodie chaps.

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